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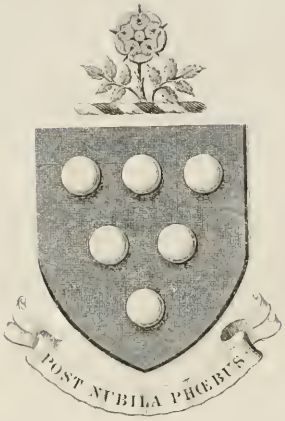
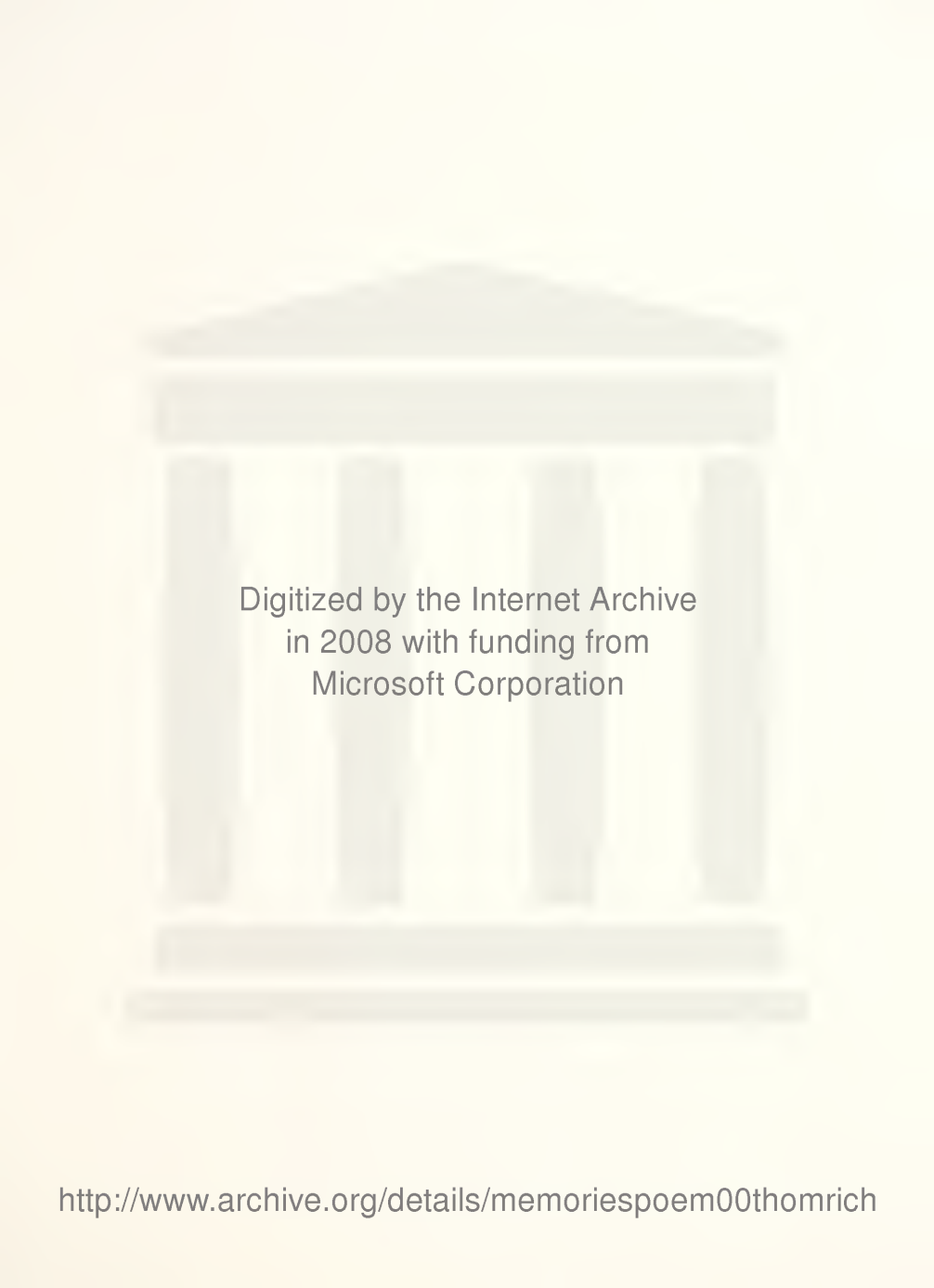


William Pinkerton, F.S.A. F.A.S.L.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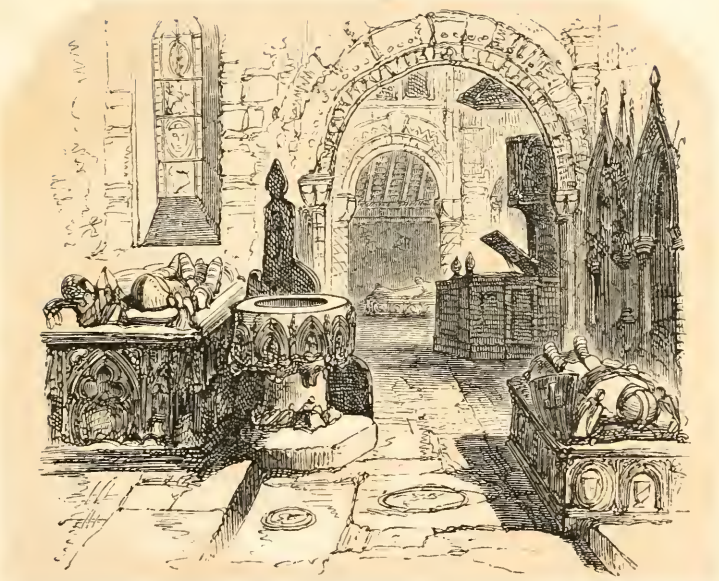
Now, having reached the consecrated ground,
They slowly pass the lych-gate passage wide.

MEMORIES;

A Poem,

BY

GEORGE THOMAS THOMASON.



LONDON:

BELL & DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.

ERRATA.

Page 52, line 3.—*For* "bank," *read* "dank."
Page 75, line 16.—*For* "Its," *read* "Their."
Page 80, line 12.—*For* "comes," *read* "come."

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MEMORIES.

"My one oasis in the dust and drouth
Of city life.—TENNYSON.

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TO

MR. CHARLES ELLIS,

OF

TWICKENHAM MEADOWS,

AS A TRIFLING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OF HIS

KINDLY EXPRESSED SYMPATHIES TOWARDS THE AUTHOR,

This Production

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT,

G. T. THOMASON.

Introduction.

INTRODUCTION.

Spared but a moment from the sickly town,
I feel new vigour throbbing from my heart,
As on this fragrant bank I lay me down
And think o'er scenes in which I once had part.

How often I have watched the changing skies
While resting shadowed by yon hawthorn tree—
And peopled worlds ; and 'mid the destinies
Of fancied men, thought what would come of me.

And sometimes in that future, Love, supreme,
Led me by silvered streams, where fairy elves
Played softest music ; and where every theme
Seemed but a gentle echo of ourselves.

Time was, when harboured by entwining trees,
In peaceful summer-time, I lingered here,
Nor gave one thought of an hibernal breeze,
But looked on life as one long, smiling year.

Time is, and Truth has triumphed over Hope,
And all the myth of childhood's faith belies;
For vanished dreams have narrowed up the scope
Of what seemed once the brightest destinies.

Time will be, even as the groaning earth
Gives ever back in an extended yield—
Trained by deep suffering for a future birth
We swell the numbers in God's harvest field.

How many direful changes have been wrought
Since last I sat upon this sloping mound!
Regrets alone spring up where friends are sought,
And old companions are not to be found.

Are there some graves, by tender grasses waved,
Where youth lies buried 'ere its time of bloom ?
Are there—for higher, nobler purpose saved—
Some of the loved ones, stronger than the tomb ?

Do they forget the once familiar call ?
And yet, in spirit, haunt each treasured spot ?
Have they one thought of me ? or have they all
Their early vows of constancy forgot ?

Then, oh, that memory would passive lie
Enshrined o'er broken faith, and boyhood's love,
And, silent, turn each bold, ambitious eye
To Friendship's birth, and resting-place, above !

Vain are regrets—we need not make a sting
To poison Hope, or wound with fatal pain !
But rather from our early day-dreams bring
Some pleasant recollections back again.

Winter.

And giant trees which erst like gods appeared,
By puny man are humbled to the ground.

I.—WINTER.

Low humid fogs hang in the thickened air,
As if Old Time were whispering with Death,
That they shut out from heaven—in strong despair
Would cast on earth their life-destroying breath.

Now where the lusty, o'ergrown woods are cleared,
The bright axe falleth with a sullen sound;
And giant trees which erst like gods appeared—
By puny man are humbled to the ground.

What plaintive woes these peaceful woods disturb!
What wrath is bursting from the vengeful clouds!
What blighting of "the young and tender herb!"
What gloom this scarce-remembered scene enshrouds

Yet nature, always bountiful and kind,
Failing her struggling children to release,
While gently teaching them to be resigned,
Warms them to strength beneath a snowy fleece.

However dreary be the world without,
There's glowing comfort round the heaped-up fire—
Whose gleam all loving kindness traces out,
Whose warmth enlarges every good desire.

There, as around the sparkling log we throng,
We heed no howling whirlwind passing by,
But listen to the lowly carol-song,
Whose "Tidings" breathe of comfort and of joy.

The cattle now the whitened fields forsake,
And seek the shelter of the well-strawed yard;
The huddled sheep stand quiet by the brake,
And, piteous, wait the herdsman's slow regard.

First grumbling at the cold
Moves, tristful, to the pond and breaks the ice.

At length he drives them to a warmer fold,
With turnips stored in many a tempting slice;
And when they're fed—first grumbling at the cold—
Moves, tristful, to the pond, and breaks the ice.

And now the solemn silence reigning round,
Is broken by the faithful robins' lay,
As on a snow-capped sign-post he is found,
Cheering some lonely traveller on his way.

What, though heaven's vault with music does not ring,
And larks in numbers seek the stubble warm?—
The missel-thrushes early love-notes sing,
And piping wrens are heard above the storm.

What though no verdure clothes the pasture-field,
Nor vernal scent the healthful air receives?
The aconite and snow-drop blossoms yield,
And honey-suckles spread their tender leaves.

The mighty voice of Nature's never still,
Her vast omnipotence is unsubdued ;
Her tongue, though hushed, bespeaks a sovereign will ;
Her hands but rest for future work renewed.

For though at cottage doors the roses cling—
Their odorous course of summer's beauty run ;—
In mead and valley, sign of coming spring,
The primrose buds are watching for the sun.

And what cares happy youth for winter's gloom ?
It shouts, unawed, upon the unyielding stream ;
The winds add beauty to its healthful bloom,
And warm as kindly as the summer's beam.

The ploughman works upon the fallow lands
Till snowflakes hide the furrow from his sight ;
The woodman, often pausing, beats his hands,
Till welcome shadows, warn him of the night.

And there the children nestle round the door,
And watch the sparks that round the anvil jet.

His wood amassed, and tied with osier band,
He trudges homeward, whistling as he goes ;
But stays to give a neighbour helping hand,
Whose waggon-wheel is buried in the snows.

And when set free, the steaming, panting team
Press onward in the fast declining day
To where the forge emits its kindling beam,
Till "roughed," impatient to pursue their way.

And there the children nestle round the door,
And watch the sparks that round the anvil jet ;
Till, grown oblivious by the bellows' roar,
Their oft-repeated errands they forget.

At length, before the gathering shades of night
Have closed around the humble cottar's home,
He sees his dear ones' shadows by the light
Which through the window scares the leaden gloom.

For though the winds are howling at the door,
As though the lowering skies their will opprest ;
Yet, blazing faggots gild the red-brick floor,
Where honest labour takes its evening rest.

The anxious wife his well-patched coat removes,
And places by the fire the accustomed chair ;
Throws on more wood ; then, with their nestling loves,
Their frugal evening meal they, grateful, share.

The neighbours sit within the chimney wide,
And speak of lords and 'squires in tones subdued ;
While the old dog keeps playful watch, beside
The youngest inmate of that cottage rude !

The quiet pipe, the homely jug of ale,
Reward the patient labours of the day ;
And the old dame, her grandchild's ears regale
With " oft-told tales" of giant, ghost, or fay.

'Ere break of day
The herdsman to the frozen sheep-walk steals.

No thrilling brow, nor wildly racking brain,
No anxious cares their peaceful quiet break ;
No proud ambition, harrassing and vain,
Their evenings cloud, their midnight slumbers wake.

Nor their rude bosoms' fancied woes distress,
Of sentiment, or false refinement born :
Simplicity to them is happiness
Calm as a summer's eve—fresh as a fragrant morn.

Full ancle deep in snow, 'ere break of day,
The herdsman to the frozen sheep-walk steals,
And tenderly removes the lambs away
From bleating ewes, that follow at his heels.

Thrice is his calling blessed ! *He* said, who spake
In tones that God nor mortal had before,
"I, the Good Shepherd, for my follower's sake,
Do *give* my life, that I may their's restore."

But soon the murky darkness fades away,
And struggling light leads out the humid dawn ;
The scathful winds, with lessening voice, obey
The histful summons of the breaking morn.

There's joy in light ! soon as the faintest gleam
Darts through the tangled length of sterile boughs—
The enamoured blackbird eyes the furtive beam,
And pours, in mellow tones, his early vows.

I love thy harmony—full-toned and bold—
Thou daring scorner of old Winter's rage !
Thy songs the music of the woods uphold ;
Thy lonely strains each peaceful thought engage.

I would such thoughts might ever dwell with me,
To teach me patiently my lot to bear ;
That for each favor I might grateful be,
And with my neighbour every blessing share.

Again sing out ! Tell us that daisies bloom ;
That violets are peeping through the grass ;
That there are skies of blue above the gloom ;
And woodland notes that even thine surpass.

Tell us, however dark our lives appear—
Though sternest sorrows glaze the saddened eye—
That latent life and truth are everywhere ;
And Faith's rich fountains every want supply.

Spring.

II.—SPRING.

Stand by old Winter !—the best word of thee
Is that which tells thy solemn reign is o'er !
Thy sweet-voiced daughter, tripping forth in glee,
Skims, daintily, her green and spangled floor.

See, she is here ! as, in a snowy flake,
Her stern old mother dies upon the lea ;
The rivers—zealous for their freedom—break
Their brittle bonds, and dance into the sea.

The bleating lambs race round the hedge-girt fields ;
The noisy rooks their rugged nests prepare ;
The earth, aroused, its tender herbage yields,
And insect worlds the common bounties share.

As on this grateful scene I gaze once more,
I sigh for one of those remembered hours
Which ne'er return ; and would again explore
Each covert nook, where grew the rarest flowers :

Passing the stile, I'll by this wood diverge,
And search for daffodil and primrose pale :
Twine them with bunches of the "olive spurge,"
And drink the luscious odours they exhale.

See ! here's the "crane's-bill" with its rosy bells
And there the gay coquettish celandine ;
Beneath this hedge the couchant violet dwells
While "lords and ladies," on that bank recline.

I'll stoop me to the starry "whitlow grass :"
I always loved it in its lowly guize ;
The "gloryless" I'll gather as I pass ;
And watch the kirtled "paigle's" opening eyes.

But thou pale, trembling wood-anemone,
The meanest of thy charms I'll not assail ;
Thy flowerets would so quickly fade with me :
Thou type of beauty—fickle, fair and frail !

Down in the vale, where soothing coltsfoot grows,
Are busy-handed village children found—
Now climbing for the blossom of the sloes,
Now rifling flowers from the teemful ground.

The sun has been awooing since the morn,
Casting his lustful rays upon the earth—
Whose fertile womb the azure skies adorn,
Whose balmy bosom heaves in myriad birth.

Full choirs of birds their pleasing homage pay,
And tell their joys beneath the pale green light
Of bursting leaves ; singing throughout the day,
And whispering love-thoughts through the star-lit night.

Returning swallows haunt each well-known eave,
And build their pendent homes from safe design
By mason never plann'd—and yet achieve
What man would fail to do with rule and line.

Now dreaming, drowsily, amid sweet sounds
Of luscious harmony, by nature wrought,
I'll to the silent brook, in which abounds
Such tempting privacies for crafty sport.

And, as yon angler plies in patience there,
With all the printed mysteries of his art,
Think how his solemn face would bright appear,
If but some boyish lore I would impart.

Come hither, gently, by this lime-tree's shade—
A thinner line upon thy angle place;
A smaller hook—this worm—and be repaid
Thy confidence with "bite" of roach or dace.

I'll to the silent brook in which abounds
Such tempting privacies for crafty sport.

The awakened sun
Is struggling through the twilight into birth.

E'en as I said—now strike ! thou hast a " bite"
Would make the eyes of " honest Walton" beam ;
Hand here thy net—now that thou hast him tight ;—
A finer fellow never swam the stream !

No thanks kind friend, I have not time to stay,
And hold sweet converse here—would that I might !
And yet, perchance reserved for me, there may,
On Time's dim record, be some hours as bright.

The early morning clothes the quiet earth
With a grey mantle, and the awakened sun
Is struggling through the twilight into birth
To bless the labour for the day begun.

And now, imperial, he his presence rears,
And drinks the dew-drops gathered by the night ;
The flowers that mourned, a-cold, dry up their tears,
And lay their blushing faces to the light.

At length the heavens are decked with mottled ray,
Fast changing as the hues the mind will track
Which on Time's ocean bears itself away
Till, Memory-laden, it a wreck comes back.

Oh, time for holy thoughts, encouragements, and zests,
And eager longings for immortal life—
For kind emotions, razing from the breast
All paltry jealousies, and sensuous strife.

Tired of the twittering martens' restless float—
Through well-daubed fingers gazing at the sky—
The field-boy hears, above the wryneck's note,
The unseen cuckoo's melancholy cry.

The lark, presumptuous, takes its upward flight,
And dares, with rapturous song, the heavenly dome—
Till, dazzled by the effulgence of the light,
He drops, disheartened, to his earthly home.

Round by the bridge, and near the parish pound,
The vicarage and quaint old schoolhouse stand;

Just so, upon its unreined courser fleet,
Recking no landmarks, rides the phantom Fame,
Till cold neglect arrests its wayward feet,
And death or madness marks its transient name.

Round by the bridge, and near the parish pound,
The vicarage and quaint old schoolhouse stand ;
There some who now in history are renowned,
First wrote their letters on a frame of sand.

No change is here save in each throbbing sense,
And nought seems older but my furrowed brow ;
The mingled voices have their influence
As in times past—but they are painful now.

The hum of learning, followed by a hush,
And then a shuffling noise upon the floor,
Tells school is o'er ; when, with impetuous rush,
Each vainly tries the first to reach the door.

Prelude to circumstance of after years,
When men for fame or power are athirst—
No matter how, where merit failure fears,
The boldest crush the weakest, and are first.

A truce to moralizing thoughts! the shout
Of mingling voices ringing through the air—
The whoop, the laugh—the ramping, roaring rout
Of happy children, quell all thoughts of care.

Once more with them the cowslips we will find,
Or catch bright insects on the teemful spray,—
Forget the mammon-world we've left behind,
And, truant, pass the joyful hours away.

The play-ground hubbub in faint echo dies,
And social mates in whispered conclave stand
In proud debate, when, urgent, each one tries
To win assent to schemes himself has planned.

Just so, when later in the busy world,
Some timidly suggest—some carry sway ;
They bear the banner of self-will unfurled,
And these, obsequious, listen and obey.

Soon scattered wide, the village green they reach—
Their late resolve forgot as soon as made—
The while their usual sports retain for each
The charm their frequency hath not allayed.

Here some young anglers on the osiered ait,
With thread, and crooked pin, their patience ply ;
And sportive bleak accept their artless bait,
Where cunning fish their infant skill defy.

Some, treacherous, straying by the hedge-rows side,
Eager on plundering mission stealthy pass,
And find the nest the brushwood fails to hide,
Then string their booty on a blade of grass.

And some are on the shady pilewort bank,
Where last years' creamy lillies lowly grew,
They gather flowers by the ditch-side bank
For wreaths of king-cups edged with violets blue.

Why blooms the thorn as thickly as of yore?
No joyous "May-morn festals" now are seen!
The village Flora, in the dance, no more
By maids, and love-struck youths, is hailed a queen!

"Doing observance to the May-day hours"
Was mixed, 'tis said, with superstition's leaven;
That heathens worshipped but the earthly flowers,
Not Him who coloured them with rays from heaven.

But on so bright and blessed holiday—
When meanest grubs are gorgeously dressed—
Shall *we* not forth, and gather in the "May,"
To deck the hair of her we love the best.

Why blooms the thorn as thickly as of yore?
No joyous May-day festals now are seen.

And then, beneath some shady chestnut tree,
With sweetest, softest, truest words confer ;
And gazing on her face so tenderly,
Tell how its dainty blossoms favor her.

And sitting there until the moon awakes,
Breathing fond words—soft as her pallid light—
Wait for the pleasing melody which breaks
Transmissive echoes through the genial night.

For soon above the tinkling sheep-bell's sound—
Above the falling waters of the mill ;
The nightingales—sweet throated—the bright round
Of space, with heavenly notes of rapture fill.

A heaven there must be, and "a Great First Cause—
For man creates no influence like this !
There are no songsters formed by Reason's laws
Who lull to dreams of everlasting bliss.

Precursor of the Summer's full-grown might !
All-honoured mistress of the wooded green !
To thee the fleeting hours their homage plight,
And deck thee in a robe of brightening sheen.

With pleasant rites, at thy fair altar found,
Are fairest children, with bright flowers decked,
While the winged choir, in a mingled sound,
Give their glad welcome with a joy unchecked.

Oh, blissful season of extending days !
Fair maiden daughter of the mighty sun !
What marvel youth to thee its homage pays
For all the guerdons from thy presence won.

For slumbering through the blank and idle night
Drear chaos lay, till, on creation's dawn,
At God's first whisper burst the trembling light,
That Spring hath since in constant memory worn.

And ever as the dying year lets fall
All thought and sympathy it owed thee here,
While, creeping to its cold and cheerless pall,
Turns still to thy soft smile, and pitying tear.

Summer.

III.—SUMMER.

AN INVITATION.

COME from man's smoke-dried town
Into God's country! there
Seat thee in silence down,
Gazing out everywhere:
Now on the waving corn
Bursting to fruitful ear,
Now on the newly shorn
Sheep, by the shady mere.

Thick leaves an arch assume,
Clustering above thy head:
And there's a luscious fume
Breathed from the clover, red.
List to the sweeping scythe,
Mowing the fragrant grass;
Or to a carol blythe
Sung by some village lass!

Broad heaths, in golden dress,
  Dance in the summer air;
Wild bees, in wantonness,
  Tread out the nectar rare:
In scented drapery,
  "Meadow-sweets" gently wave,
Where, in felicity,
  Lilies their faces lave.

Scared by the mighty sun
  Into the forest shade,
Fly-tortured cattle run,
  And in the river wade.
There the rich foliage, deep,
  Like a huge giant heaves;
There the poor brambles peep:—
  Each to its neighbour cleaves.

Come, then, from smoke-dried town
  Into the country; there
Seat thee in silence down,
  Where no proud despots are.
Breathing of heaven above,
  Passion and selfishness
Rule not; but tender love
  Woos thee with sweet caress.

There the rich foliage, deep,
Like a huge giant heaves.

And gentle dames the beaded bobbins ply
With quick exactness, or a parchment guide.

Through the fresh garnished trees there comes a sigh
Of Summer, mourning o'er the dying Spring,
As if a truant angel, passing by,
Had waved each leaflet with her trembling wing.

The gorgeous sun, with heavenly glories wrought,
Each sheltered nook with new-found light equips ;
And every bright and moted breath is fraught
With fragrance stolen from the rose's lips.

To catch the healthful zephyrs as they fly,
The cottage casement is thrown open wide ;
And gentle dames the beaded bobbins ply
With quick exactness o'er a parchment guide.

By the old wooden bridge is heard a cheer
From half the village men, and all the boys !
'Tis "shearing-tide"—the best throughout the year
For feast and fun, for "frummerty" and noise.

Soon as the skies reflect the day's last beam,
And stars illuminate the worlds above,
Young maidens throw bright flowers in the stream,
Propitiate offerings to the god of love.*

Alas, that flowers should be thrown away,
They are God's teachers to a fallen race!
Now, as thou hurlest them to swift decay,
That they no more thy flowing hair may grace,

O learn, that ever on the stream of life,
Frail mortals, fair to look upon as ye,
Are daily cast, with all their beauties rife,
And onward hurry to th' eternal sea.

O spare the flowers! when the heart is cold,
From constant mingling with this earthly leaven,
They may, His prophet-poets, point to gold
Of purest coinage from the mint of heaven.

* A practice, scarcely obsolete, connected with sheep-shearing feasts.

Nor heeds the timid deer's abrupt retreat.

The first-born of the young creation's day
Which, when God spake, burst into living light,
Fringes the hill-tops with a crimson ray,
And breaks in splendour from the sullen night.

Now scornful glancing as he stronger grows,
The depths of dim old forests to illume ;
Now blandly smiling on the tender rose,
To flush her modest cheek with maiden bloom.

From clover, vetch, and blossom of the bean ;
From ripening grass ; from lowliest of flowers ;
The active bee, from early day-break seen,
Pours its sweet music on the toilsome hours.

And while soft sighs adown the valley steal,
With breath enriched from thousand odours sweet—
The shepherd lounges o'er his noontide-meal,
Nor heeds the timid deer's abrupt retreat.

While all around there sits a heavenly calm,
That bids us back to boyhood's pleasant time,
When holy Sabbaths held a softening charm
O'er hearts impure, yet alien to crime.

What though some years have gathered on my brow
Since, in my heart, such feelings I could trace;
In yonder church's precincts there may now
Breed thoughts quite worthy of the holy place.

For while the full-toned bells their story tell
Of church prepared God-worship to receive,
There comes, with every sound the breezes swell,
A hope some tender conscience to relieve.

Hushed is the din of labour; and it seems
As if, by unseen influence from above,
Nature was basking in high heavenward dreams
Of sin destroyed, and death o'ercome by love.

The implements of husbandry are still ;
The "six days" labour in the field is done ;
The hammer sounds not, and the water-mill
In quiet sleeps, though rivers onward run.

The horses on the common lift their ears,
And snort their praises for a day of rest ;
Their master, bowed by labour and by years,
Pats playfully the one he loves the best.

From rose-thatched cottage—with its garden wall,
Where jasmine and wild hops their leaves entwine—
From palace, mansion, park, earth's pilgrims all
In one direction, now their footsteps join.

And so in time to come—the wealthy born,
As lowlier men, who loved His will to do,
Shall there unite, and bless each sacred morn
Which bade them here their Master's path pursue.

And now within the consecrated ground
They, reverent, pass the lych-gate passage wide;
Nor pause to think who next may need a mound—
Whose coffin soon its shading thatch may hide.

Just there, beneath that old yew's sombrous shade,
A narrow lane, with ivied walls o'erspread
By thick-set moss—in summer cold—was made
The silent passage of the earthly dead.

O'er one white tomb the church a shadow throws,
Which tells a story of an inward strife;
The tale—man's falseness, and a maiden's woes:
Love was with him a toy—with her, a life!

Silent upon the sacred dust I'll tread,
Which, when a boy, I sprinkled with my tears,
And pause one moment with the long-mourned dead,
Whose pleasant laugh once soothed my childhood's fears.

For flowers flourish now upon the mound,
Which the warm summer breezes gently wave ;
And fragrant roses, *red* and *white* are found,
In close embrace above her lowly grave.

Those flowers were thrown with Pity's earnest gush,
And silently record her tender fame :
How her young life had owned a passing blush—
How early death had robbed it of its shame.

Within the porch, the truthful symbol stands
Of infant entrance to the Christian life ;
All garnished over by art's skilful hands,
With the great Baptist's rugged history rife.

Half hidden by the creeping ivy's shade,
The blazoned windows, in rich glories dight,
Lend, where old barons are in marble laid,
Its slanting rays of many coloured light.

The acres broad which, living, they could claim,
Long since have passed away to stranger hands;
Their heir-looms lost—dishonoured grown the name
Which once with them stood dearer than their lands.

The very effigies which pious care
There laid in brass, by solid stone embraced,
The pulseless bodies' mouldering ruins share—
By gaping schoolboys' shuffling feet defaced.

Amidst this gorgeous fane of other days
The pastor, poor and pious, gliding by,
Ascends the antique pulpit, kneels and prays
That He may guide their frail mortality.

Above, in concert, tuneful notes aspire
To heaven—for children, maidens, youth and men,
Mingle their voices in one holy choir,
And sweetly close the prosy clerk's "Amen."

Adown the centre of this solemn pile,
Where clean-clad peasants with deep reverence kneel,
In lengthening echoes through the pillared aisle,
Marches, melodious, the full organ's peal.

Faith prompts their fervent prayers—the wings of Grace
Bear them right upward to the central throne
Where Mercy sits—and she, with smiling face,
Sends a glad angel with forgiveness down.

The service o'er, in calm and heavenly mien,
With uplift hands, the pastor now implores
For all, within that sanctuary seen,
That peace alone supplied from heavenly stores.

Thrice glorious day! from thee a sovereign calm
Exerts a spell no vicious thoughts invade;
Thy counsels all life's looser hours embalm—
Thy promise lightens sorrow's darkest shade!

With homely greetings, from the sacred scene
In scattered groups the rustics homeward wend—
Through fields fast fading from their vernal green,
By sunlit roads that round the hedge-rows bend.

And when at last the evening shadows fall
Around the meagre dwellings of the poor,
The gray-haired matron, 'neath the elm-tree tall,
In silence reads beside the cottage-door.

The dim, grey twilight is diffused around,
And gently curtains out the Saviour's day ;
And soon the labourer, in slumber sound,
Passes the peaceful hours of rest away.

Up 'ere the dawn has spread its welcome light—
Just as the stars the vaulted heavens forsake—
We'll watch the dying of the transient night,
And note the grandeur of the morning break.

On every hand the lusty happy shout
Of sun-burnt labour greets us as we pass,
While laughing maidens toss the hay about,
Nor heed the sweet death-breathings of the grass.

The gathering skies, grown angry with the heat,
Portentious growl, and passive herds affright—
Till, big with vengeance, darkening as they meet,
They spend their strength in flashing glares of light.

The radiant flowers, adust amid their crowd
Of honied sweets, lift up to heaven their eyes,
Nor heed the drunken revelry of cloud
So they but draw some tears from pitying skies.

The sun, potential, through a flood of tears,
Looks on the family of men below,
And, careful to avert all needless fears,
Forms, with a smile, his Maker's promised bow.

As holy sighs dissolve the untold pain,
  However dreary, bitter thoughts enweave,
So now the face of nature smiles again,
  As fainting clouds a brighter azure leave.

Here, 'neath this oak, affection's warmest kiss
  Fell softly on my lips, on such a day,
When closely clasped, in ecstacy of bliss,
  The furtive moments passed too soon away.

Oh, how reproachfully some thoughts arise
  Of peace destroyed, which her fond presence gave!
From pleasant paths, where beauty held the prize,
  There comes, in silence, shadows of the grave.

I may not mourn that joys like these have been—
  For youthful hours dead I need not sigh—
For if their pleasures are no longer seen,
  Their gushing memories can never die.

Now let me, shrouded by this arch'd relief,
Gaze through the foliage of the waving trees—
Nor see Him manifest in every leaf:
Nor hear His voice in every whispering breeze:

But grateful be for every lesson taught,
For every blessing earth-sent from above;
And humbly thank the Giver of each thought
That links the mortal to immortal love.

Autumn.

IV.—AUTUMN.

A HARVEST HYMN.

"All Thy works praise Thee," thou Infinite Good!
And all should bless Thy ever glorious name!
And for Thy plenteous supply of food
With joyful hearts we would Thy love proclaim.

On every hand the brown and bending grain,
Seems like a waving sea of endless love
Poured out unmeasured, where our griefs have lain,
As if our selfish want of faith to prove.

Therefore we would with universal voice—
From the rude hamlet to the palace gates—
With deep emotion gratefully rejoice
That Thy fond care our lot compassionates.

Feeling Thy condescension, let us show
Our gratitude—that all of "low degree"
Blessed, through our hands, by Thy great overflow
Of mercy, be assuaged of misery.

Nor shall the gleaner in the stubbled-field
Be left forgotten by the reaper's blade;
For, from the fulness of the harvest yield,
Shall many a ripened ear of corn be laid.

Thus for Thy bounties we would grateful prove,
Nor one unfed amid our brethren see:—
First giving to Thy name our holiest love,
Keep in our hearts our neighbour next to Thee.

THE harvest's over, and the lumbering wain
Reels, with its weight, adown the dusty road;
The horses, of their bells and ribbons vain,
Drag home their master's last and heaviest load.

The farmer meets them at the appointed time,
And shares with all alike his welcome cheer,
Until, with chorus rude and homely rhyme,
They close the harvest labours of the year.

Awhile, in fresh shorn fields, the village poor
That ancient usage ply for their relief
Which blessed the needy Israelites of yore—
"The half-pressed olive—the forgotten sheaf."

Nor shall the gleaner in the stubble field
Be left forgotten by the reaper's blade.

Where rosy fruit bestrewed the orchard ground.

Nature has changed her robes—the woods partake
Of deep warm tints, by Autumn's finger traced ;
The flaunting flowers the gay parterre forsake,
Though cottage doors with jasmine stars are graced.

Soft breathing Autumn ! memories of thee
Bring back old joys that with thy name are found :—
The merry sports beneath the apple-tree,
Where rosy fruit bestrewed the orchard ground :

The hop-poles, swayed beneath their fragrant weight—
Their clustered vines by maiden hands relieved :
The crisp-edged hazel with its tempting freight—
In tattered schoolboy's pinafore received :

The autumn "feast,"—the fair with all its fun—
Its spangled grandeur, wondrous to our eyes ;
Its subtle tricks that all our halfpence won ;
Its puny dwarfs, and men of fabled size :

The happy group that skipped the meadows through,
To pluck ripe berries from the prickly spray ;
The ringing laugh the woodland echoes drew ;
The round of pleasures on each holiday :

The robins singing in a plaintive strain,
As if they mourned the summer beauties fled ;
The children hushed, while list'ning once again
To notes that 'mind them of some playmate dead.

And then the oft-told tale amid the brake
Of "dying babes," the red-breast failed to warm :
And how the bird, grown sacred for their sake,
No boy, however wanton, dare to harm.

The aged man has tottered to the fields,
Nor heeds how feebly slow his step must seem ;
To little children all his pleasure yields,
As oft he watches them with kindling beam.

The aged man has tottered to the fields,
Nor heeds how feebly slow his step must seem.

The best of all philosophy is given
To such as these—they clothe with rainbow wings
Each favour'd thought—they make a little heaven
Of trifles culled from brightest side of things.

The woods, now glowing with a roseate hue,
That baffled limner's skill can ne'er express—
Or if successful would be deemed untrue—
So gorgeous is fair nature's evening dress :

While faintly smiling at her own decay,
More lovely growing at each parting breath ;
Like thoughts that cheer the Christian on his way,
As gladness lights him through the gates of death.

The sower lightly treads the yielding earth,
And casts the seed upon her bosom, cold ;
Awaiting patiently the coming birth
To bless his labour by a hundred-fold.

So every thought by sorrow sternly thrown
In chastening spirit o'er the youthful brain,
In after years to full fruition grown,
Brings its return in boundless joy or pain.

Clearing a passage for the stagnant pool,
The ditcher plashes up the rugged bank;
The thoughtful hedger whets his gleaming tool,
And sternly clips the straggling branches, rank.

Commingled powers struggle hard for life:
Now heat—now cold; now sunshine and now gloom
And dull-eyed Winter urges on the strife
That leads to graceful Autumn's fatal doom.

The last brown leaflet meets the flaccid ground;
The last sand-marten takes its destined flight;
Beneath the oak the last ripe acorn's found;
And the last flowers with the earth unite.

The withered leaves around look cold and drear,
And seem like crumbling relics of the past.

The sheep are to the turnip-pastures led ;
The plough is resting from its Autumn toil ;
The partridge huddles in the stubble bed,
And soon becomes the ardent fowler's spoil.

The mighty winds, their deafening horrors blow—
And gentle life, and all sweet song is dead !
I often wonder where the children go
When all the other sunny things have fled.

The withered leaves around look cold and drear,
And seem like crumbling relics of the past ;
For there are some who once were warm and dear,
Now cold as them in death's low mansion cast.

The early lost—the quick consumptive breath ;
The lonely wreck upon the midnight seas ;
The step of Age ; the gurgling voice of Death ;
The failing mind : are typified by these.

But other leaves will come, returning Spring
Will burst to loveliness through their decay ;
And with new verdure, hopes and friendships bring,
Though frail, and perishing, these pass away.

And thus Time runs its eager, circling race,
Nor heeds frail mortal's ever-falling tears ;
But upward turns its cold and constant face
Towards the long vista of eternal years.

THE END.

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